

Congressman Childers Votes to Support Troops, Honor Veterans

July 10, 2009

Washington, DC - Today, Congressman Travis Childers (D-MS) voted to support our troops and honor our veterans by funding critical veterans health services and the construction of key facilities for training and housing our military. The Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Act (H.R. 3082) will strengthen quality health care for more than six million patients - including 419,000 veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The bill also provides advance funds for veterans health services in 2011, so that funding for veterans' health care are timely and reliable.

"This important legislation strengthens the quality health care services that our veterans have earned and so many rely on, and funds the construction of critical facilities, including housing for both soldiers and their families. The bill also provides much-needed support for our National Guard and Reserve, recognizing members' great service to protect our freedoms," said Congressman Childers. "With the advance funding provided by today's legislation, we can ensure that crucial veterans health care services are never interrupted."

Specifically, the bill will invest in the following areas for veterans' health care:

- General Operating Expenses. Enable the Department to hire roughly 1,200 additional claims processors to continue to work down the backlog of benefits claims and to reduce the time to process new claims. The most recent VA quarterly status report estimates that nearly 397,000 claims are pending.
- Rural Health. Innovative practices to improve access to care for veterans in rural areas. More than 3.2 million (41 percent) of enrolled veterans live in rural or highly rural areas.
- Mental health care.
- Advanced VA Healthcare Funding. Advance appropriations for fiscal year 2011 for three medical accounts: medical services, medical support and compliance, and medical facilities, to ensure timely and predictable funding for the veterans health care system.
- Medical Facilities. Non-recurring maintenance at existing VA facilities to address identified shortfalls and to ensure the Department's facilities remain capable of delivering world class medicine.

To support our troops, the bill also provides funding to construct key facilities for training and housing, including funding for the guard and reserve initiative, to recognize the critical contribution made by reserve personnel and address urgent unfunded requirements.

The bill also takes additional steps to support the military families who give so much in service to this country - with military child care centers, military family housing, and additional Vets Centers to provide community-based readjustment counseling for veterans and their families.

A pro-gun, pro-life Mississippian, Congressman Travis Childers (D-MS) represents the First Congressional District in North Mississippi. He is a member of the fiscally conservative Blue Dog Coalition and serves on the House Agriculture and Financial Services Committee. Congressman Childers co-chairs the reestablished bipartisan Congressional Rural Caucus and was appointed to the bipartisan Second Amendment Task Force. For more information, visit <http://www.childers.house.gov/>

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